

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Digital Repository

Retrospective Theses and Dissertations

Iowa State University Capstones, Theses and
Dissertations

1998

Draining life forces: vampirism in Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights

Julie A. Thilmany
Iowa State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/rtd>

 Part of the [Literature in English, British Isles Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Thilmany, Julie A., "Draining life forces: vampirism in Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights" (1998). *Retrospective Theses and Dissertations*. 170.
<https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/rtd/170>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Iowa State University Capstones, Theses and Dissertations at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Retrospective Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.

**Draining life forces: Vampirism in Emily Bronte's
*Wuthering Heights***

by

Julie Ann Thilmany

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

Major: English (Literature)

Major Professor: Kathleen Hickok

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

1998

Graduate College
Iowa State University

This is to certify that the Master's thesis of
Julie Ann Thilmany
has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

Signature redacted for privacy

Major Professor

Signature redacted for privacy

For the Major Program

Signature redacted for privacy

For the Graduate College

For my sister,
who taught me to read.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2. CATHERINE AS A VAMPIRE	14
CHAPTER 3. VAMPIRE AND WOMAN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY	29
CHAPTER 4. CONCLUSIONS	38
WORKS CITED	41
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	43

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

"We've braved its ghosts often together, and dared each other to stand among the graves and ask them to come. But Heathcliff, if I dare you now, will you venture? If you do, I'll keep you. I'll not lie there by myself . . . I won't rest till you are with me. I never will!" (Brontë 98)

While the vampire in literature has had many varied and changing characteristics, one characteristic has remained relatively constant. From the first vampire in English literature, Lord Ruthven of John Polidori's "The Vampyre" (1819), onward, the vampire in literature has been a consistently male creature. Modeled after Polidori's patient and traveling companion, Lord Byron, Ruthven's "dead grey eye" and the "deadly hue of his face" (Polidori 108) provided the standard image of the vampire in nineteenth-century English literature.

Rarely did authors of the nineteenth century choose to make their vampires female. Joseph Sheridan LeFanu's "Carmilla," first published in 1872, is credited as being the first ". . . to break with the tradition of the literary vampire as a Byronic figure by creating a woman vampire" (Senf 48). Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, however, presents an interesting argument against this claim that LeFanu created the first female vampire in English literature. In *Wuthering Heights*, first published in 1847, 25 years *before* "Carmilla," Brontë created her own female vampire in the character of Catherine Earnshaw Linton. This creation of the female vampire provided Brontë with the means to comment on and criticize the roles women were forced to play in the nineteenth century.

Recent criticism of *Wuthering Heights* has employed various means to interpret the actions of the characters of Catherine and Heathcliff. These range

from pointing to the separate realities found within the novel, to viewing Catherine and Heathcliff as alternate selves who create whole selves only when fused together. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar view *Wuthering Heights*' central theme as "female rage," where "female nature has risen, it seems, in a storm of protest" (1980: 262). In Catherine, this rage began at an early age, with asking her father for a whip. Instead of a whip, however, she got Heathcliff, whom Gilbert and Gubar view as Catherine's metaphorical whip. Heathcliff acts as Catherine's "alternate self," allowing her to complete herself and to break free from the oppressiveness of nineteenth-century patriarchy (1980: 264-265).

In opposition to this relationship with Heathcliff, which is Catherine's chance to break free from the patriarchal nature of her world, Gilbert and Gubar point to Edgar Linton and Catherine's marriage to him as what pulls her back into the patriarchal world from which she longs to escape. Catherine must accommodate herself with the world of Thrushcross Grange, a painful and sometimes violent experience. It is this experience which sets the groundwork for the issues of power and powerlessness that weave themselves throughout the novel.

At the same time Catherine learns that "if it is degrading to be a woman it is even more degrading to be *like* a woman" (1980: 277). She is also aware that her acceptance of Edgar's marriage proposal is an acceptance of her self-imprisonment in the role of lady, wife, and mother. Degrading or no, Catherine makes the only choice she sees available in her attempt to gain control over her life and over the patriarchy in which she finds herself immersed. In the end, Brontë is left to tell the reader that for a "woman,

trapped in the distorting mirrors of patriarchy, the journey into death is the only way out" (Gilbert and Gubar 1980: 284).

As stated earlier, Heathcliff offers Catherine some sort of support as a figurative whip, a means of breaking free from the patriarchal oppressiveness of her brother. But Gilbert and Gubar see Heathcliff on another level, as well: that of a female-type character in the sense that he is orphan/younger son, the type of male character who "unite[s] with women in rebelling against the tyranny of heaven" (1980: 294). It is this "femaleness" of Heathcliff's character, and its resulting powerlessness, that makes his relationship with Catherine function. Where he is able to provide her with an alternate self to "lessen her female vulnerability," she provides him with "a soul, a voice, a language with which to address cultured men like Edgar" (1980: 295). Gilbert and Gubar view Catherine and Heathcliff, together, forming an autonomous whole.

Robert Liddell looks to Catherine's discussion with Nelly the night she announces her marriage plans with Edgar Linton as a means of explaining the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff. He sees Catherine's statement to Nelly, "surely you and everybody have a notion that there is, or should be, an existence of yours beyond you" (Brontë 63-64), as Catherine's acknowledgement of a sense of her personal immortality (Liddell 40). Liddell combines Catherine's feeling of personal immortality with her "atavistic longing for Eden, and a desire for our true country, which is not here" (40) as an explanation for Catherine's personal ideology. For Catherine, however, her true country *is* here, in her home at Wuthering Heights.

Liddell inadvertently combines Catherine's dream of being in heaven only to be flung back to earth¹ with the numerous descriptions of Heathcliff as a demon figure: "He is almost the embodiment of four of the deadly sins: pride, avarice, anger and envy. . . . almost purely evil" (54). Liddell views the characters of both Catherine and Heathcliff as demonic in many respects, searching for some sort of personal immortality and willing to do nearly anything to attain it.

Dorothy Van Ghent sees *Wuthering Heights* as portraying two separate realities: one reality is the raw, natural reality portrayed by Catherine and Heathcliff; the other is the civilized world of the second generation in the novel. The first reality is represented by "the violent figures of Catherine and Heathcliff . . . striving to identify themselves as human, but disrupting all around them with their monstrous appetite for an inhuman kind of intercourse" (12-13). The "inhuman kind of intercourse" Van Ghent describes is a relationship governed by raw nature; this is in opposition to the more civilized human interaction, governed by the laws of society, portrayed by the second generation in the novel. Van Ghent views Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship as the key to unlocking both the dream Lockwood has during his brief stay at Wuthering Heights and the sightings of Heathcliff and Catherine's nightly walks on the moors after their deaths. She views Lockwood's dream as *merely* a dream of Catherine's ghost (while at the same time asking "why should Lockwood, the well-mannered urbanite, dream *this*?" [15]) and attributes the sightings of the dead pair to Lockwood's ghostly views of the otherworld.

¹ Catherine's dream of being flung from heaven and back to earth equates with the experience of Satan being thrown from heaven. Liddell, however, uses the demon figure to describe the character of Heathcliff; this image might better be placed in association with the character of Catherine.

Van Ghent continues to describe the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff as lacking in aspects of the adult world. At the same time Van Ghent views their relationship as non-adult, however, she centers in on a key point:

This regressive passion is seen in uncompromised purity in Catherine and Heathcliff, and it opens the prospect of disintegration--disintegration into the unconsciousness of childhood and the molecular fluidity of death--in a word, into anonymous natural energy. (15)

This raw reality of nature as portrayed by Catherine and Heathcliff, while viewed as taboo by the larger nineteenth-century society around them, provides Brontë's framework for *Wuthering Heights* and the characters that dominate the first half of the novel. These features are also woven within the second half of the novel with Heathcliff's attempts to regain those things taken from him by the "civilized" characters who abound in the second half of the novel.

David Sonstroem focuses on the limits of the visions of the characters in the novel, which range from the simplicity of Lockwood's inability to comprehend the room organization at Wuthering Heights to the complexities surrounding Catherine's limits of vision within her own life. Sonstroem sees both Catherine and Heathcliff as divided against themselves, where each of them "characteristically denies or disregards one aspect of [them]selves" (31). Death is the ultimate triumph for both Catherine and Heathcliff: for Catherine, death represents her escaping the boundaries of her restricted life with Edgar at Thrushcross Grange; for Heathcliff, death marks his reunion with Catherine, as well as his ultimate triumph over Edgar Linton. Sonstroem points to Catherine's death scene in the novel, in which Nelly refuses to open a window and allow Catherine to feel the breeze coming in from the moors one last time,

as Catherine's attempt to recapture her past life and become free from all constraints in doing so. "Their real difference is over values: Nelly would preserve life at all costs, whereas Catherine would sacrifice a long confinement for a brief contact with 'what had been my world'" (34).

Sonstroem views Catherine's attempt at returning to what had been her world as the center of her nature. She has realized that what she thought was heaven in her marriage to Edgar and her move to Thrushcross Grange is, in fact, "a heaven incompatible with her basic nature" (35). Death is the only way for her to return to what is her true heaven (*Wuthering Heights*), rather than to enter the heaven she was thrown out of in her earlier dream.

Lyn Pykett speaks of *Wuthering Heights* as crossing boundaries of literary genres and traditions. Not only does it cover ground in both the Gothic and Romantic genres, primarily in the first half of the novel; it also delves into the realistic tradition of Victorian domestic fiction, primarily in the second half of the novel. Pykett views Brontë's novel and Catherine Earnshaw's story as an archetypal example of the Female Gothic genre:

Female Gothic enacts fantasies of female power in the heroine's courage and enterprise, while simultaneously, or by turns, representing the female condition as both confinement and refuge. (76)

She sees *Wuthering Heights*' presentation of the genre's "representations and investigations of women's fears about the private domestic space which is at once refuge and prison" (76-77) in the actions of Catherine. Catherine begins the novel free to roam the moors with Heathcliff; at the time of puberty, she is confined to the household after her injury at Thrushcross Grange; and finally, she is confined even farther into the genteel world of the household upon her marriage to Edgar. Pykett views Catherine's longing to escape from "this

shattered prison" (Brontë 124) -- her body -- as her longing to escape from womanhood itself (Pykett 77).

U.C. Knoepfelmacher speaks of the after-life in *Wuthering Heights* as joining the unquiet ghosts of "separated brother/sister selves who could only be reunited through death" (116). Although the novel's conclusion leaves the reader in an open-ended position, allowing for alternative explanations of the ghosts seen roaming the moors by a child, Knoepfelmacher sees only one alternative. That alternative is an eternity's existence as wandering spectres for Catherine and Heathcliff, one in which "the human 'crag' of Heathcliff's remains has been vacated by a spirit that has rejoined Catherine" (119).

Very little of the criticism on *Wuthering Heights*, recent or otherwise, has focused on the vampire as a means of interpreting the novel. James B. Twitchell, in *The Living Dead: A Study of the Vampire in Romantic Fiction*, and Carol A. Senf, in *The Vampire in Nineteenth-Century English Literature*, both discuss the possibility of vampires in the novel. Both, however, are reluctant to view either Catherine or Heathcliff as more than metaphorical vampires. Twitchell focuses on the character of Heathcliff alone as a vampire. He hesitates in naming Heathcliff a vampire, stating that "to contend that Heathcliff acts like a vampire seems the height of critical folly" (116), and that he does not want "to imply that Heathcliff is a vampire, only that his relationships with other people can be explained metaphorically" (118) in this way. Twitchell continues:

Emily Brontë seems content to let us slide the vampire legend behind Heathcliff, almost as if it were a metaphor to explain his peculiar behavior. Whether or not he actually does suck blood, he acts *as if he were* vamping other characters. . . . Nevertheless, it seems that Catherine is the one he "vamps," perhaps only in the psychological sense, but even that is left ambiguous. (119)

Twitchell spends much of his critical work speaking of male vampires through the past centuries of poetry and fiction, rarely dwelling on female vampire characters. Twitchell denies that it is Catherine who is the vampire in the novel, and the one who vamps Heathcliff; he is also unwilling to concede the possibility that Brontë was in fact using the vampire motif literally.

Emily Brontë resuscitated the vampire in the poetic characterization of Heathcliff: . . . By using the vampire mythopoetically, [Brontë] showed how powerful an analogy for aberrant energy transfer the vampire could be. (6)

Twitchell's reluctance to speak of Catherine as the primary vampire in the novel, seeing her as nothing other than the one who is vamped by Heathcliff, is contradicted by Carol A. Senf.

Senf views Catherine as the primary vampire in *Wuthering Heights*, using Catherine's vampiric existence as a social metaphor: vampires have "shed their conventional social lives to be free and independent-- . . . free from moral strictures and free from prohibitions against unlimited sexuality and violence" (73). But unlike the male vampires of nineteenth-century literature, who were viewed as aristocrats and seducers of virginal women, Senf shows us that female vampires of the same century were seen as "animals because they are not just evil but unfeminine, unmotherly, and parasitic as well" (73). Senf, opposed to Twitchell, spends her critical piece discussing the female vampire in literature. Speaking of the female vampire in general, Senf points to the ways in which

patriarchal structures victimize women. . . . [Vampire fiction] criticizes the way many women lived in the nineteenth century. For example, both vampires and women are parasitic creatures, the one by nature, the other by economic necessity. Both are dead, the one literally, the other legally. Both are defined primarily by their physiology rather than by their intelligence or emotions.

Finally, however, both have a latent power to influence the lives of others. (53-54)

Senf believes Brontë uses the character of Catherine, in both her mortal and vampiric incarnations, throughout the novel as a metaphor for the ways in which the patriarchal structures of the nineteenth century victimized women. But in contrast to Twitchell, who is reluctant to move beyond the metaphorical possibilities that the vampire motif allowed Brontë, Senf begins to allow for the possibility that Brontë was using the vampire motif as something more than a metaphor:

Brontë's metaphoric use of the vampire--if indeed it *is* a metaphor . . . helps the reader to focus on a subject that was of great interest to Brontë: the unique condition of women during the period in which she wrote, a condition that made them alternately powerless and powerful. (78,79)

But while Senf allows for the possibility that Brontë was using the vampire motif as more than a metaphor, she also remains reluctant to state that Catherine is indeed a literal vampire. In her concluding statements on *Wuthering Heights*, Senf concedes only that Brontë uses the "vampire as a metaphor to reveal both [female's and other outsider's] lack of social and economic power and their tremendous personal power" (93), and she never retracts her statement that LeFanu's "Carmilla" was the first female vampire in English fiction.

Emily Brontë would certainly have had knowledge of characters such as the vampire, having grown up reading from her father's chiefly Romantic library. Among the volumes in Patrick Brontë's library were the complete works of Byron (Williams 205), which included Byron's "Fragment of a Story," which is similar in tone and subject to Polidori's "The Vampyre." Also included in the complete works is his poem, "The Giaour":

But first, on earth as Vampire sent,
 Thy corse shall from its tomb be rent:
 Then ghastly haunt thy native place,
 And suck the blood of all thy race:
 There from thy daughter, sister, wife,
 At midnight drain the stream of life. (Byron 317)

Other Romantic works, such as Polidori's "The Vampyre," may also have been a part of Patrick Brontë's library. In addition to these Romantic pieces, the Brontës may have had knowledge of *Varney the Vampire*, a popular novel published in serial form seven years before the publication of *Wuthering Heights*.

In addition to reading the English Romantics and their stories and poetry about vampires, Emily also had access to German literature. There is ample evidence that "around the turn of the nineteenth century the English *and German* Romantic poets were experimenting with the vampire myth as metaphor for the psychology of human interactions" (Twitchell 103, italics my own). A romanticized image of Emily at Haworth Parsonage included her working in the kitchen with a book of German propped in front of her, continuing her studies despite no longer living and working at the Pensionnat Heger in Brussels (Frank 183). Much German literature was available to her, published in translation in *Blackwood's Magazine*, the "old family favourite" and viewed by Charlotte Brontë as "the most able periodical there is" (Frank 105, 66). One of the stories published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1839 was "a translation of Tieck's *Pietro d'Abano* . . . which spread the love of monster and *vampire*, witch and werewolf, through a Europe tired for the moment of eighteenth-century common-sense" (Ward 120, italics my own).

Emily was not the only member of her family to use the image of the vampire in her writing. In *Jane Eyre*, her sister, Charlotte, describes Bertha Mason, the madwoman of Rochester's past, as a vampire:

"I saw the reflection of the visage and features quite distinctly. . . . It was a discoloured face - it was a savage face. I wish I could forget the roll of the red eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments!" "Ghosts are usually pale, Jane." "This, sir, was purple: the lips were swelled and dark; the brow furrowed: the black eyebrows widely raised over the bloodshot eyes. Shall I tell you of what it reminded me?" "You may." "Of the foul German spectre - the vampire." (C. Brontë 311)

Charlotte's use of the vampire, however, is metaphorical in nature: Bertha symbolizes the destructive behavior of humanity, showing that horror is often a part of ordinary life (Senf 94). Charlotte's use of the vampire, in addition to being metaphorical, also differs from Emily's use on another major level. Emily's description of the vampire, which follows in the footsteps of Polidori and Byron, possesses the pale complexion and sharp canines common among fictional vampires. In contrast, Charlotte's description of the vampire follows more in the vein of folklore: "[the vampire's] face is commonly described as florid, or of a healthy color, or dark" (Barber 41). This duality of vampires in the Brontës' fiction presents evidence that the sisters were knowledgeable of vampires from both folklore and fiction.

While the metaphorical use of the vampire has been applied to the character of Catherine, and more notably to Heathcliff, I will show that the nineteenth-century reader of *Wuthering Heights* would have had knowledge of the vampire both as a literary character and as a creature of folklore, and could have viewed Catherine as a literal vampire instead of merely a metaphorical one. Carol Senf speaks of Catherine as a vampire:

Heathcliff's becoming a vampire at the conclusion of the novel --even if he is a vampire only in the metaphorical sense rather than the literal--depends on the reader's awareness that literary characters--even extremely wicked ones--rarely become vampires spontaneously. . . . Therefore, the novel requires someone to fulfill the vampiric role. That someone is Catherine who returns to *Wuthering Heights* after twenty years. (79)

Even in naming Catherine a vampire, however, Senf never disagrees with the claim that LeFanu created the first female vampire in English literature. Senf feels that the vampires in *Wuthering Heights* are more than merely metaphorical, yet she is reluctant to view them as completely literal creatures. Senf believes the novel never really answers the question of whether Catherine, and consequently Heathcliff, is a vampire (78).

It is my view, however, that Emily Brontë used her knowledge of vampires in literature and folklore to ensure that her readers, once they moved past the romance aspect of the novel, could see the vampires in the shadows. Not only did Brontë write a novel about vampires; she created the first female vampire in English literature. *Wuthering Heights* uses vampirism as a "death" which releases Catherine from the constraints of her social roles as woman, wife, and mother and enables her to live the life she truly desired.

Catherine's mortal life is one she is forced into by the culture of the society around her. Her marriage to Edgar is entered into with the hopes of gaining money and status and, consequently, power. Love is not necessarily any motivation for her to enter the marriage. This type of marriage was common for women in the nineteenth century. It was one of the only ways in which women could successfully gain any sort of power within a society which did everything possible to ensure that women gained little, if any, control over their own lives.

As I shall illustrate, Catherine's immortal life provided her with one of the few means available to her in the nineteenth century to live the life she truly desired. Whether she freely chose this existence or whether it was forced upon her, Catherine's "second" life as a vampire allows her freedom to express her true nature. She is able to run free on the moors near Wuthering Heights with Heathcliff, away from the constraints placed upon her by society in the nineteenth century.

I shall first argue for the presence of vampires in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, as well as contradict previous vampire interpretations of the novel. Previous vampire interpretations of the novel have been, in my opinion, pared down to a mere metaphor in order to avoid being seen as "the height of critical folly" (Twitchell 116). I shall argue, however, not only the presence of the vampire in the novel, but its use as more than a metaphor for human relations and power struggle. Secondly, I shall take the vampires from the novel and illustrate their relevance to the woman question, reading Catherine's vampire existence as Emily Brontë's commentary on the role and status of women in the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 2

CATHERINE AS A VAMPIRE

Her appearance was altered, as I had told Heathcliff; but when she was calm, there seemed unearthly beauty in the change. . . . her eyes . . . appeared always to gaze beyond, and far beyond – you would have said out of this world. Then, the paleness of her face . . . (Brontë 121)

Paul Barber identifies folklore's universal belief in four ways in which a person would become a vampire after death; among these causes of vampirism are predisposition and events (29). Predisposition means that "people who are different, unpopular, or great sinners are apt to return from the dead" (29) and roam the earth as vampires. As an example, one universally recognized member of this category would be the suicide. Events means that a person would become a vampire for the reason most readers of fiction commonly recognize: the person who will return from the dead as a vampire is the person who has been bitten and had his or her blood drained by a vampire (32). While Barber states this as the most common event to cause a person to become a vampire, he also mentions other possibilities.

Barber interviewed informants from around the world in regard to other ways a person might become a vampire after death. One informant stated that "vampirism could come about because the wind from the steppe had blown over the body" (Barber 33). Another informant believed that a curse was sufficient to cause a dying person to become a vampire (36). And finally, "Although vampires are far more often male than female, the exceptions to the rule are commonly mothers who have died in childbirth" (Barber 36). Each of these causes of vampirism will be discussed in relation to the character of Catherine throughout the novel.

Emily Brontë never directly addresses Catherine's becoming a vampire in *Wuthering Heights*. The causes of vampirism mentioned above by Barber, however, offer some clues as to how Catherine becomes a vampire in the novel. Among the causes of vampirism include being different or a great sinner. Catherine has always been different, independent minded, and an outsider of sorts -- all of the things which a woman in the nineteenth century was not supposed to be. This independent mindedness is first given voice in the novel when Catherine is a young child. Her father is traveling to Liverpool for the day and asks what his children wish him to bring back for them. Hindley chose a fiddle and Catherine, though "hardly six years old, . . . chose a whip" (Brontë 28). Even at this early age, Brontë is setting Catherine up as a character who wishes to be master of her own world, rather than being mastered by someone outside of it.

Catherine's great sin is her dream of being cast out of heaven:

"If I were in heaven, Nelly, I should be extremely miserable."
 "Because you are not fit to go there," I answered. "All sinners would be miserable in heaven." "But it is not for that. I dreamt, once, that I was there. . . . I was only going to say that heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out, into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights; where I woke sobbing for joy." (Brontë 62)

Catherine's dream of such unhappiness in heaven, as well as her wish to remain on the earth and at Wuthering Heights for eternity, would definitely be considered a sin in both the eyes of the church and nineteenth-century society in general. This great sin on Catherine's part makes her more likely, in the beliefs of folklore, to return to the earth as a vampire after her death. This dream also foreshadows what will happen to Catherine at the time of her

death. She will not be welcomed into heaven. Instead, she will be flung out of heaven, forced to roam the earth for eternity as a vampire.

Catherine could also become a vampire by being bitten and drained of blood by another vampire. Although Brontë never mentions a vampire preying on Catherine, there is evidence in the novel that such an act occurs. While Catherine is nearing death, she mentions to Nelly that she has been haunted in the night:

"These three awful nights, I've never closed my lids--and oh, I've been tormented! I've been haunted, Nelly! . . . Don't *you* see that face?" she enquired, gazing earnestly at the mirror. And say what I could, I was incapable of making her comprehend it to be her own. . . . "It's behind there still! . . . And it stirred. Who is it? I hope it will not come out when you are gone! Oh! Nelly, the room is haunted! I'm afraid of being alone!" (Brontë 94, 95-96)

Common in both folklore and fiction is the belief that vampires cast no reflection in a mirror. In this scene, Catherine is mesmerized by the vampire who has presumably been preying on her during these nights. And although Nelly thinks that Catherine is seeing her own reflection and is simply unable to recognize it, Catherine may be looking at something other than the mirror. She may be seeing the actual vampire standing in the shadows which Nelly is unable, or unwilling, to see. Later in the novel, Heathcliff sees Catherine, who has been draining his blood. In this later scene in the novel, Nelly is unable to see the vampire Catherine. Nelly's inability or unwillingness to see the supernatural at the time of Heathcliff's death mirrors her inability to see it at the time of Catherine's.

Another piece of evidence that Catherine is being preyed upon by a vampire is given witness in this scene, stemming from the fact that Catherine is seeing something or someone Nelly is not aware of. Nelly has covered the

mirror with a shawl after Catherine's fear or inability to recognize her reflection and is about to leave the room when she is "summoned back by a piercing shriek. The shawl had dropped from the frame" (Brontë 96). Because Nelly was on her way out of the room, she would have had her back to the room, unable to see what Catherine witnessed. Nelly assumes that the shawl has fallen from its place, uncovering the mirror of its own accord; the other possibility is that the vampire who is creating the immortal Catherine has pulled the shawl from its place when Nelly's back was to the room. Revealing once again her own reflection, and the absence of his own, Catherine's maker is showing her that she has no choice in the matter of becoming a vampire. Catherine's transformation is almost complete; she will soon be as invisible to the world of mirrors as is her maker. Catherine's "piercing shriek" brings Nelly back into the room, whereupon "the horror gradually passed from her countenance; its paleness gave place to a glow of shame" (Brontë 96). This look on Catherine's face, which Nelly interprets as a "glow of shame," could just as easily have been a look of resignation and acceptance of what was to come for Catherine, simply misinterpreted by Nelly.

In addition to Catherine's shriek at the absence of a reflection being cast by her vampiric maker, there is another explanation for this shriek. Nelly interprets the cry as an inability on the part of Catherine, due to her illness, to recognize her own reflection in the mirror. While Catherine's illness may have caused her mind to wander, believing herself at home at the Heights, her inability to recognize her own reflection may also be due to the effects of nineteenth-century society. Already well on her way to making her transformation into a vampire, she looks in the mirror and sees the effects of

her earlier transformation into a woman of the nineteenth century. Having been transformed into what society taught her she ought to be as a proper woman, she has so altered her true nature that she no longer recognizes the free, uninhibited girl she once was.

Evidence of Catherine's becoming a vampire up to this point has followed the most commonly held beliefs of the causes of vampirism from both folklore and fiction: being preyed upon by an existing vampire, and having the predisposition in life to ensure a person's becoming a vampire after death. I shall now move forward to some lesser-known methods by which a person becomes a vampire. One of folklore's means of becoming a vampire occurs when "the wind from the steppe had blown over the body" (Barber 33) of a dying person. Both steppes and moors are places of wide, open land; one is covered with grass, the other often with small shrubs. In the same scene where Nelly narrowly misses a glimpse of Catherine's maker, Catherine requests that Nelly open the window and allow the outside air into her chamber:

"And that wind sounding in the firs by the lattice. Do let me feel it--it comes straight down the moor--do let me have one breath!"
To pacify her, I held the casement ajar, a few seconds. A cold blast rushed through. (Brontë 96)

So shortly before her death, asking for the midnight air from the moors to be let in for her to breathe, Catherine is fulfilling one of the requirements from folklore to ensure that she become a vampire after her death. This scene also mirrors the reader's first glimpse of the vampire Catherine, when Lockwood mistakes her presence for a fir branch brushing the window in the wind.

The next means by which Brontë follows folkloric tradition concerning the vampire is through the use of the curse, sufficient to cause a dying person to

become a vampire (Barber 36). Heathcliff adds another assurance that Catherine will become a vampire by cursing her directly after her death:

"Where is she? Not *there*--not in heaven . . . And I pray one prayer --I repeat it till my tongue stiffens--Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest as long as I am living! You said I killed you--haunt me, then! . . . Be with me always--take any form--drive me mad! only *do* not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you!" (Brontë 129)

Heathcliff's belief that such a curse could be successful, causing Catherine to remain on the earth in one form or another, whether ghost or vampire, is evidenced in his reaction to Lockwood's claim of Catherine's presence during the night he spent at Wuthering Heights. Driven to "a piece of superstition" and "bursting into . . . an uncontrollable passion of tears" (Brontë 33), Heathcliff quite obviously holds a strong belief in the results of his curse upon Catherine at the time of her death. And it is quite obvious from this passage as well that this is not the first time since his original curse that Heathcliff has called upon Catherine to haunt and return to him: "Cathy, do come, Oh do--once more! . . . hear me *this* time -- Catherine, at last!" (Brontë 23).

The final way in which Brontë follows the conventions of folklore in creating the vampire Catherine is the fact that Catherine died in childbirth. Barber states that rarely were women likely to become vampires; one of the exceptions to this rule includes women who died in childbirth (36). In Nelly's narrative to Lockwood, she describes the birth of the second Catherine and the subsequent death of the first:

About twelve o'clock that night was born the Catherine you saw at Wuthering Heights . . . and two hours after the mother died . . . No angel in heaven could be more beautiful than she appeared. . . . Incomparably beyond, and above us all! *Whether still on earth* or now in heaven, her spirit is at home with God! . . . one might have

doubted . . . whether she merited a haven of peace at last. (Brontë 127-128, italics my own)

Included in this passage, in addition to the death of Catherine in childbirth, is the question of Catherine's morality in the eyes of the society around her. Nelly describes Catherine as looking more beautiful than an angel, yet she continues to raise the possibility that Catherine is not in heaven at all. Rather, Nelly raises the possibility that Catherine is still on the earth, much like the dream that Catherine once shared with her. As Catherine was flung from heaven because of her longing to be on earth and at *Wuthering Heights*, she may once again have been thrown from heaven to roam the earth after death. Indeed, Catherine now roams the earth as a vampire.

Ample evidence exists in *Wuthering Heights* to show that Catherine was indeed becoming a vampire. Throughout her life, Catherine held the predisposition necessary to ensure her becoming a vampire after her death. And the days immediately preceding her death provide evidence that she was indeed being preyed upon by another vampire. In addition to this evidence, other aspects of folklore beliefs came into play during Catherine's last days: she asked to feel the breeze from the moors once more, to breathe the air in; the fact that Heathcliff cursed her and essentially required her to haunt him after her death; and the fact that Catherine died in childbirth, or shortly thereafter.

The reader's first encounter with Catherine in the novel is told through the eyes of Lockwood, who is spending the night at *Wuthering Heights*. Lockwood is sleeping in Catherine's old room when he hears what he thinks is a fir-bough brushing up against the window. Hoping to silence the sound, Lockwood breaks through the window and puts out his arm to grab hold of the

branch. But instead of touching the branch, he grabs a cold hand, that of Catherine Linton, who clings to his hand and sobs, "'Let me in -- let me in! . . . It's twenty years,' mourned the voice, 'twenty years, I've been a waif for twenty years!'" (Brontë 20).

What Lockwood perceives to be Catherine's ghost attempts to enter the house, and Lockwood rubs her wrist along the broken window until blood runs from the wounds, soaking the bedding. This early scene in the novel presents much evidence that the "ghost" Lockwood encounters is not a ghost at all, but a vampire. The first indication that Catherine is not a ghost is that, unlike the other ghosts which appear in the novel, she does not dissipate into nothing when she comes into contact with a living person.² Instead, Lockwood is able to physically touch her, drag her wrists against the broken glass of the window, and draw blood from the wound. If this Catherine were a ghost or a vision, there would be no evidence that Lockwood was dealing with a truly physical being; Catherine, however, is indeed a physical being who is capable of human contact.

The fact that the vampire is capable of physical contact with living beings is minimal evidence when compared to the fact that her body is full of blood. Both folklore and historical accounts of vampirism include the fact that the body of a vampire is not only fresh (not decomposed), but is full of "fresh" blood (not coagulated as is associated with a dead body). This is the blood the vampire has presumably been ingesting from its victims. And when a vampire is cut or staked through the heart, this blood flows freely from the wounds (Barber 8).

² Hindley's ghostly appearance to Nelly (Brontë 84) is one such ghost in the novel who, when it comes into contact with a living human, dissipates into thin air.

When Lockwood's attempts at keeping the vampire Catherine out seem to be failing, he piles up books on the windowsill, including the Bible, to prevent her entering. Lockwood eventually screams, which draws the attentions of Heathcliff. When Heathcliff learns what caused the scream, he goes to the window and entreats Catherine to return: "'Come in! come in!' he sobbed, 'Cathy, do come. Oh do -- *once* more! Oh! my heart's darling! hear me *this* time -- Catherine, at last!'" (Brontë 23).

Heathcliff's entreating Catherine to return is yet another connection to the folklore mythos of the vampire. It is believed that a vampire cannot enter a dwelling until it is invited in:

the vampire cannot pick and choose on his own; rather, he must be picked, "invited" into the relationship. . . . the victim must make some inviting move . . . the vampire cannot cross a threshold without this invitation. (Twitchell 10)

Consequently, the person who extended the invitation to the vampire eventually becomes the vampire's next victim. Related to this is that a great sinner is more likely to invite or welcome a vampire than a moral person.

The second piece of evidence that Catherine is, in fact, a vampire comes from Brontë's continuing to follow folklore beliefs about the vampire. Catherine's inability to pass the stack of books in the window, namely the Bible, in her attempts to enter the house; her return to Wuthering Heights; and her choice to return to Heathcliff, the person she loved most during her mortal life -- all are traits of the vampire in folklore. Common to folklore is the fact that the vampire is repelled by religious objects (Barber 64), which would include the Host, holy water, crosses, and the Bible. Catherine's return to Wuthering Heights also follows the traditions of vampire folklore, where "undead protagonists return like folklore vampires, to embrace the confined

spaces they had lived in" (Auerbach 17). Catherine's choice to come back to Heathcliff also follows the traditional belief that vampires are forced to return to feed on those they loved most during their lifetime, where "the dead are most dangerous, as a rule, to those closest to them in life" (Barber 194).

These previous sources all state that vampires return to the spaces they had lived in while alive, as well as the fact vampires are forced to feed on those they love. Brontë spends much of *Wuthering Heights* proving to her readers that Catherine loved Heathcliff more than any other. Even in accepting a marriage proposal from Edgar, Catherine refuses to sever her ties with Heathcliff:

"We separated! . . . Who is to separate us, pray? They'll meet the fate of Milo! Not as long as I live, Ellen -- for no mortal creature. Every Linton on the face of the earth might melt into nothing, before I could consent to forsake Heathcliff." (Brontë 63)

Catherine here states outright what she shows in her actions throughout the novel. Heathcliff is the other half, if not the whole, of her soul. And her love for him "resembles the eternal rocks beneath--a source of little visible delight, but necessary" (Brontë 64). Catherine cannot exist without Heathcliff, nor he without her. These passages are evidence of the fact that Heathcliff is the only logical choice of victim for the vampire Catherine.

The remaining scenes in the novel containing evidence of Catherine's vampirism all center around Heathcliff. The first two instances center on Heathcliff's visits to Catherine's grave; the others center on Heathcliff's final days, when he encounters Catherine and is transformed into a vampire himself. Heathcliff's first visit to Catherine's grave occurs on the day of her burial. Heathcliff plans to dig her up and hold her in his arms one last time. Just as he is about to open the coffin, however, he feels a presence near him which causes him to abandon his work:

"I was on the point of attaining my object, when it seemed that I heard a sigh from some one above, close at the edge of the grave, and bending down. . . . There was another sigh, close at my ear. I appeared to feel the warm breath of it displacing the sleet laden wind. I knew no living thing in flesh and blood was by; but as certainly as you perceive the approach to some substantial body in the dark, though it cannot be discerned, so certainly I felt that Cathy was there, not under me, but on the earth." (Brontë 219)

This first evidence after Catherine's death that she may indeed be a vampire is, nearly twenty years later, proven true. Heathcliff returns to Catherine's grave when the sexton is burying Edgar Linton and convinces the sexton to dig up Catherine's coffin. He is surprised to find that Catherine's appearance had not changed, she had not decomposed, despite the passage of nearly twenty years:

"when I saw her face again -- *it is hers yet* . . . I expected such a transformation on raising the lid, but I'm better pleased that it should not commence till I share it. . . . You know, I was wild after she died, and eternally, from dawn to dawn, praying her to return to me -- her spirit . . . I have a conviction that they can, and do exist, among us!" (Brontë 218-219, italics my own)

One question which arises here is how Catherine has been able to get out of the coffin, which has been buried nearly twenty years, to perform her vampire acts in the night. Barber offers two possible solutions to this problem, stating that the vampire "often as not performed his evil while remaining in the grave" (131), or they may "do their blood-sucking in their invisible form--their body remains in the grave" (100). This explanation from folklore allows the reader to get around the fact that Catherine has been lying in a seemingly undisturbed grave for nearly twenty years.

Although Catherine may have been performing her evil from the grave for the first part of her vampiric existence, she is very much a physical presence at the time of her encounter with Lockwood. This sudden physical appearance

of Catherine is explained by Heathcliff's opening Catherine's grave at the time the sexton was burying Edgar Linton. This action on the part of Heathcliff, in addition to the fact that she was undecomposed when he unearthed her, acts as her release from the physical grave and allows her to be once more a physical being roaming the moors and lands near Wuthering Heights.

The final pieces of evidence in *Wuthering Heights* of Catherine's vampirism occur during Heathcliff's final days, when he begins to leave the house at night, staying away until morning and the sunrise. Heathcliff himself seems to understand that his life is about to be changed dramatically: "Nelly, there is a strange change approaching -- I'm in its shadow at present" (Brontë 245), and he appears to be reaching some sort of peace, stating, "To-day, I am within sight of my heaven. I have my eyes on it" (Brontë 249). Heathcliff's midnight excursions continue, and his actions lead Nelly to question if he is "a ghoul, or a vampire?" (Brontë 250). This question is the only time in *Wuthering Heights* where Emily Brontë uses the word "vampire" to describe her characters, presenting evidence that she knew of the creature of the vampire and was using it deliberately.

Heathcliff also appears to understand what is happening to him at this point in the novel. Nelly questions him on whether he feels ill, finally asking Heathcliff, "Then, you are not afraid of death?" (Brontë 246). Heathcliff's reply not only answers her question, it also tells both Nelly and the reader of *Wuthering Heights* that he realizes what is happening to him and that he accepts and embraces those things:

"Afraid? No!" he replied. . . . "Why should I? . . . I have a single wish, and my whole being and faculties are yearning to attain it. They have yearned towards it so long, and so unwaveringly, that I'm convinced it *will* be reached--and *soon*--because *it has devoured*

my existence; I am swallowed in the anticipation of its fulfillment."
(Brontë 246, italics my own)

Heathcliff here knows of his fate, knows that Catherine, in both her mortal and immortal state, has devoured him completely. He spent his life in attempts to spend it with her, and his acknowledgement that he will spend eternity with her is here voiced. His wish will finally be fulfilled, and he is "swallowed in the anticipation" of its actual happening.

Heathcliff's actions from this point on, up until the time of his death, are very reminiscent of Catherine's final days, seeing and hearing things of which Nelly seems unaware:

when I regarded him alone, it seemed exactly that he gazed at something within two yards distance. And, whatever it was, it communicated, apparently, both pleasure and pain, in exquisite extremes: . . . He muttered detached words also; the only one I could catch was the name of Catherine, coupled with some wild term of endearment or suffering, and spoken as one would speak to a person present--low and earnest, and wrung from the depth of his soul. (Brontë 251)

Heathcliff acknowledges that he is being reunited with Catherine in these final days, but he tells Nelly, "My soul's bliss kills my body, but does not satisfy itself" (Brontë 252). He knows that Catherine's presence, his "soul's bliss," is killing him by feeding on his blood and that "the union in the grave, though desirable, is not sufficient" (Tayler 87); the two will need to be joined together in a life of immortality for their union to be sufficient.

The final piece of evidence that Heathcliff is aware of the fact that Catherine is draining his blood and transforming him into a vampire like herself is presented by Brontë on the day before his death. Heathcliff has, much in the same fashion as Catherine shortly before her death, expressed a fear of being alone. Nelly describes him as having "a wild look" and "want[ing]

somebody with him" (Brontë 253). When Nelly and the young Catherine are both unwilling to join him, Heathcliff exclaims: "Well, there is *one* who won't shrink from my company! *By God! she's relentless.* Oh, damn it! It's unutterably too much for flesh and blood to bear--even mine" (Brontë 253, italics my own).

Heathcliff's acknowledgement that "I tell you -- I have nearly attained *my* heaven; and that of others is altogether unvalued and uncoveted by me!" (Brontë 253) is highly reminiscent of Catherine's dream of what heaven is and her lack of feeling at home there. This is also the great sin of disregarding the traditional view of heaven which, together with Heathcliff's being preyed upon by the vampire Catherine, will ensure that he become a vampire and share immortality with Catherine. Heathcliff's transformation into a vampire is completed the following night when he dies his mortal death. Nelly enters the room, the same room where he had earlier in the novel entreated Catherine to come to him, and finds him:

I tried to close his eyes . . . They would not shut; they seemed to sneer at my attempts, and his parted lips and *sharp, white teeth* sneered too! . . . Joseph shuffled up and made a noise, but resolutely refused to meddle with him. "Th' divil's harried off his soul." (Brontë 254, italics my own)

Heathcliff's "sharp, white teeth" are a part of the final evidence that he has become a vampire and joined Catherine in her immortality. In addition to Heathcliff's acquiring the sharp teeth so common of fictional vampires, there is evidence that he has been drained of blood: "The lattice, flapping to and fro, had grazed one hand that rested on the sill; no blood trickled from the broken skin" (Brontë 254). Catherine has drained Heathcliff of his blood in transforming him into a vampire, and he will remain empty of blood until he has ingested blood as a vampire.

The final piece of evidence of Catherine's vampirism occurs nightly after Heathcliff's death, according to some of "the country folks [who], if you asked them, would swear on their Bible that he *walks*. . . . Heathcliff and a woman" (Brontë 255). This sighting of two vampires walking the moors together nightly leads to Nelly's refusal to stay in Wuthering Heights at night, as well as her reluctance to stray outside in the dark: "Yet still, I don't like being out in the dark, now; and I don't like being left by myself in this grim house [Wuthering Heights]" (Brontë 255). Although Nelly refuses to believe openly in ghosts and the supernatural, her actions show her conviction that the two still walk the earth as vampires.

CHAPTER 3 VAMPIRE AND WOMAN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

". . . [T]he thing that irks me most is this shattered prison, after all. I'm tired, tired of being enclosed here. I'm wearying to escape into that glorious world, and to be always there; not seeing it dimly through tears, and yearning for it through the walls of an aching heart, but really with it, and in it." (Brontë 124)

Emily Brontë creates a female vampire in *Wuthering Heights* as a means of criticizing and commenting on the roles of women, their power and powerlessness, in the nineteenth century. The vampire in nineteenth-century literature possessed many of the traits which were seen as negative and inappropriate when found in women. Some of these traits include rebelliousness, power, escape, and overt sexuality. The vampire's "rebellion against authority and, therefore, against the symbols of authority" (Senf 9) is quite evident in Catherine. Paul Barber names predisposition as one of the possible ways a person would become a vampire after death: "people who are different, unpopular, or great sinners are apt to return from the dead" (29).

Barber continues, explaining, "In general, lists of potential revenants [vampires] tend to contain people who are distinguished primarily by being different from the people who make the lists" (30). In the nineteenth century, the people who made these lists would have consisted primarily of men. Men of the nineteenth century had authority over women and their actions to the extent that women had no control over their lives for the most part. Women were not allowed to vote, nor were they allowed personal property after marriage. When a woman married, her possessions became her husband's possessions; this went so far as to include even the children that were the result of the marriage. A married woman must be prepared to love, honor, and obey her husband, and once married, a husband's word was the law his wife must

obey. Independent-mindedness on the part of the woman was not a part of the marriage agreement in the eyes of the husband.

In addition to men in general, one of the authorities over women in the nineteenth century was the church, and those things associated with the church. Among the authorities Catherine turns against during her life is the church: the preaching of one of the servants at Wuthering Heights, Joseph, and the Bible, to name but a few. Catherine's view of religion was nature-oriented; she discovered the power of her God and her world in the freedom of the moors. This greatly conflicted with the religion she was taught through Joseph's doctrine-oriented preaching of the Bible. This rebelliousness against the church is evidenced in the vampire Catherine in her nightmarish appearance to Lockwood and her inability to enter the house past the Bible, which is among the books in front of the broken window.

Another authority Catherine rebels against is nineteenth-century society's view of the proper woman. Images of proper ladyhood and motherhood are among those she rebels against throughout the novel. Constantly fighting against the constraints placed upon her by the larger society during her mortal lifetime, Catherine was unsuccessful at finding a middle ground in which to place herself concerning these roles. A successful struggle to fit Catherine's nature into these images was an impossibility that Brontë could not accomplish in a believable way for her readers. When Catherine begins to conform herself to what the larger society expected of her, she begins to show signs of madness in the eyes of those around her.

By making Catherine a vampire, however, Emily Brontë found a way to create a strong female character in the nineteenth century who could rebel

against preconceived images of what a woman should be with a large measure of success. The vampire Catherine is allowed to rebel against anything she chooses. She is, in fact, expected to rebel against certain things in her new existence. The vampire's rebelliousness against the authorities of the nineteenth century, especially the authority of the church, is well known throughout both folklore and fiction. From popular fiction of the nineteenth century to the cinema of the twentieth century, vampires are unable to stand the sight of a cross, unable to enter a church, and are repelled and sometimes killed by the touch of the Host and holy water. The rebellion against and aversion to anything associated with the church are central to the popular image of the vampire.

As best stated by Nina Auerbach, "Vampires go where power is" (6), and this is no exception with the vampire (or the mortal) Catherine. As a mortal, Catherine's first attempt at gaining any sort of significant power in the novel is when she accepts Edgar Linton's marriage proposal. Catherine accepts Edgar's marriage proposal, in part under the false impression that she will gain some sort of power through her marriage to Edgar: "he will be rich, and I shall like to be the greatest woman of the neighbourhood, and I shall be proud of having such a husband" (Brontë 60). This description of a marriage to a wealthy and somewhat powerful man describes what little power many women in the nineteenth century would have been able to attain.³ Because women were not given many opportunities at power, the profitable marriage Catherine enters

³ Senf names four main ways in which women in the nineteenth century could gain indirect power: being a member of a powerful family, gaining power as an individual (primarily the ability to influence others), sexual charms, and moral influence (89).

into with Edgar represents one of the few ways she would be able to have any sort of control over her life.

The money and prestige gained from a marriage to Edgar, when opposed to what she might have gained from a marriage to someone such as Heathcliff, would have given Catherine one of the few sources of power open to a woman in the nineteenth century. Catherine is even naïve enough to think that if she marries Edgar she will be able to continue her friendship with Heathcliff and to use Edgar's money to "aid Heathcliff to rise, and place him out of my brother's power" (Brontë 63). This statement shows the false hopes and rather naïve ideas that many women held about what sorts of leverage might be gained after marriage, even to a man viewed as powerful within his community.

In addition to attempting to gain power through her marriage to Edgar, another way in which Catherine attempted to gain some control over her life was through her refusal to eat, her illness before her death, and her protests against and attempted escape from the patriarchal world around her. While most readers in the twentieth century would not see Catherine's illness as madness, a nineteenth-century reader might be apt to interpret Catherine's actions in her last months (as well as throughout her entire life) as a form of madness. A nineteenth-century psychologist would most likely have diagnosed Catherine as suffering from "moral insanity," which

redefined madness, not as a loss of reason, but as deviance from socially accepted behavior. . . . This definition could be stretched to take in almost any kind of behavior regarded as abnormal or disruptive by community standards. (Showalter 29)

Catherine fits this description of moral insanity, having behaved in a manner seen as abnormal or disruptive by nineteenth-century society. To so openly

display this nature, that of a free, independent-minded woman, would have definitely been viewed as abnormal or disruptive in the nineteenth century. In much the same way as Barber's example of the list of potential vampires being written by those who are naming the characteristics that they find inappropriate, those who made the decision of who fits the description of madness were also defining the illness in terms of what they considered appropriate and inappropriate behavior for those in the society around them.

After diagnosing Catherine's illness as moral insanity, the same nineteenth-century psychologist would more than likely have placed her in a mental institution. While there, she would have spent her days contenting herself with "genteel, improving, and passive activities" (Showalter 82). In mental institutions, the occupations given to women were intended to reinforce conventional behavior for their gender in an attempt to cure them of their various forms of madness:

While men patients worked at a variety of jobs in workshops and on the asylum farms, women patients had little choice in their employment, which took place indoors and in some cases was meaningless fancy-work or make-work, such as sorting colored beans into separate piles that were dumped together again at night. (Showalter 82)⁴

The asylum officials were intending to set the female patients back into their proper places within society by having them reinforce conventional behavior for their gender. What had gotten many of these women sent to the asylum in the first place was the "ladies' chain of feminine propriety and the

⁴ Compare this with folklore's belief in burying poppyseeds or knots with persons who were feared to return after death as vampires: "Usually what is at issue is a harnessing of the revenant's [vampire's] compulsions: he must collect the grains [or untie the knots] one at a time, and often just one per year. This so engages his attention that he is obliged to drop all other pursuits [such as draining everyone's blood]" (Barber 49).

straitjacket of a weird but mandatory feminine gentility" (Showalter 98). By placing them in these typically gendered situations within the asylum, the doctors were effectively silencing the women and attempting to force them back into the same gender roles from which they were trying to break free before being placed in the asylum:

Victorian madwomen were not easily silenced, and one often has the impression that their talkativeness, violation of conventions of feminine speech, and insistence on self-expression was the kind of behavior that had led to their being labeled "mad" to begin with. (Showalter 81)

While in the asylum, women who deviated from conventionally ladylike behavior were punished. Women who exhibited such unladylike behavior (swearing, being dirty, mischievous, or violent) were subject to variety of punishments. These punishments ranged from cold baths and sedation to solitary confinement in padded cells and basements (Showalter 81).

Elaine Showalter offers one possible explanation for Catherine's illness directly before the time of her death: "Sickness presents a tempting escape from the contingency of the feminine role; it offers a respectable reason to be alone, and real, if perverse, opportunities for self-development" (64).⁵ Catherine's illness definitely allowed her freedom in many senses. She was allowed time to herself when these bouts of illness came upon her, with no one to interrupt her solitude for fear of distressing her further. Illness as a form of escape was relatively common among women in the nineteenth century, Emily Brontë included. Brontë regularly went on hunger strikes and escaped her post at

⁵ In addition to illness offering a means of self-development, Gilbert and Gubar inadvertently offer another interesting idea as to Catherine's refusal to eat during her pregnancy. Self-starvation during pregnancy is not only a means of exercising some control over her body and existence, but has traditionally been seen as "an attempt to vomit up the alien intruder, the child planted in the belly like an *incubus*" (1980: 286, italics my own).

Pensionnat Heger in part because of the results of this illness. As Katherine Frank described it, "Illness, once again, was the great liberator" (134).⁶

Often, however, this illness was not enough of an escape from the patriarchal society of the nineteenth century and death became the only real escape and freedom for women. Emily Brontë, at the time of her death (and throughout her life in her writing), knew this, and her "refusal to eat or speak . . . disclosed her own side of things. She sought to be free . . . and to control her own fate--even if this meant dying to do so" (Frank 253). Brontë's own death allowed her an escape from the world around her, with its demands on women, in much the same way that Catherine's death allowed her an escape. In death there could be no more demands placed upon a woman, other than eternal rest from the pulls of society and its roles and expectations placed on her.

By contrast with Catherine's failed attempts at gaining significant control over her existence as a mortal woman, as a vampire Catherine has complete control over her existence. She not only has the ability to choose with whom she wishes to spend eternity without having to consider society's expectations of her; she is able to decide for herself whom she wishes to embrace into her life. Having gained this ability to make her own choices, Catherine is able to live the life she truly wanted rather than the one looked upon most favorably by the larger society in which she lived. She is free to run on the moors and the open landscape in a way in which she was unable to do during her mortal lifetime after her marriage. As a wife, lady, and expectant mother, Catherine was not allowed by society's conventions to run free; this

⁶ Illness and other forms of withdrawal from the outside world were common escapes of women writers in the nineteenth century: Brontë's illness, as mentioned above, Florence Nightingale's illness and fainting spells (Showalter 63), and Emily Dickinson's withdrawal from the ordinary, outside world (Gilbert and Gubar 1996: 858).

would have been shirking the "duties" associated with her assigned roles within society.

Another characteristic of the vampire in the nineteenth century which was seen as a negative trait in women was the vampire's strong overt sexuality: "The vampire of folklore is a sexual creature, and [its] sexuality is obsessive" (Barber 9). Catherine, throughout her mortal life, was described as very passionate. She had a quick temper and very strong emotions. When she reveals to Nelly that she has accepted Edgar's marriage proposal, for instance, she is quite adamant about the depth and strength of her feelings for Heathcliff. Although these feelings were deemed inappropriate for someone in her position, being engaged to someone else, Catherine rebels and feels them anyway. These feelings go beyond mere love; they are so strong as to believe in "a notion that there is, or should be, an existence of yours beyond you" (Brontë 63-64). This passionate nature in Catherine is looked upon as a negative trait for her to possess; as a woman, she is expected to show more control over her emotions.

As a vampire, however, Catherine is able to express her passionate, as well as her sexual, side. Vampires have always been viewed as erotic creatures (Auerbach 6), and Catherine is no exception to this image. She returns to seduce Heathcliff to immortality by drinking his blood, uniting their bodies in a way that even intercourse cannot produce. Blood, "that precious fluid that symbolizes the vital force and whose loss poses a mortal threat" (Marigny 14), is most important to the survival of the human race. Catherine here again rebels against society's standards. Instead of remaining true to her monogamous sexual relationship with Edgar, even after death, she now

engages in an act of sexual union with Heathcliff. And this union is decidedly an act of sexual passion and pleasure: it produces nothing in terms of procreation of the human race. This joining of Catherine, the vampire, and Heathcliff, the mortal man, is more overtly sexual than any woman of the nineteenth century was supposed to be, especially with someone other than her husband. Catherine's acceptance of her existence as a vampire, then, is an embracing of both sexual and emotional freedom.

CHAPTER 4 CONCLUSIONS

"I wish I were out of doors -- I wish I were a girl again, half savage, and hardy, and free; and laughing at injuries, not maddening under them!" (Brontë 97)

Catherine's becoming a vampire in *Wuthering Heights* allows her an escape and a release from the social and psychological constraints of her role as wife, lady, and mother, which were extremely restricting to women in the nineteenth century. The death involved in becoming a vampire allowed Catherine the chance to move beyond these constraints and become the person she should have always been in life, a creature true to her nature. Catherine's transformation into a vampire allowed her an escape from the roles society expected her to play. She becomes free to roam the moors and seduce the man she loves; she is free from having to play the part of wife and mother. These results of Catherine's mortal death, ironically, allow her to live.

Catherine's ability to live, as a vampire, the life she would have chosen for herself had she not had the expectations of her family and society to contend with, is evident in how she appears to different persons after becoming a vampire. When Lockwood sees her, the first sighting of the vampire Catherine, she is a young girl, with "a little, ice-cold hand!" (Brontë 20). After Catherine has returned and transformed Heathcliff into a vampire, however, the country people see Heathcliff walking with a *woman* (Brontë 255). Before she transformed Heathcliff into a vampire, Catherine still appeared to others as the young girl who wanted to enter the house and get what she wanted. After she has transformed Heathcliff, however, she has finally accomplished what her mortal life would have become had she followed her true nature.

This ability of the vampire to appear in different forms is common in folklore. Paul Barber speaks of these creatures "who can, after all, appear in many forms. . . . take other forms . . . [and] make themselves invisible" (88). In this way, Catherine is at last able to choose the person she wishes to be in a way that, literally, she was unable to do while she was alive. She is no longer the child who married Edgar Linton, but the woman who chooses to spend eternity with Heathcliff. Her appearance, first as a child, then as a woman, is evidence of her knowledge that she herself has made the choice for herself; it is not a choice influenced by the ideals of the nineteenth century. Her existence as a vampire provides her the power to become what she wishes, rather than what society wishes her to be.

In *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë creates the first female vampire in English literature. The vampire Catherine symbolizes all of the things which women in the nineteenth century were not supposed to be. While Catherine possessed many of the vampiric characteristics while still alive, she was criticized and thought to be a failure in her role as the proper woman. After her death and transformation into a vampire, however, Catherine is able to live these characteristics in a manner befitting her personality and existence. Catherine's rebelliousness against authority, against the church, and against the ideals forced upon women by nineteenth-century society, makes her existence as a vampire a successful one.

Catherine Linton, contrary to what many scholars believe, is the first female vampire in English literature. LeFanu's "Carmilla," while being the first to overtly name the woman a vampire, was published twenty-five years *after* Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. Catherine could have been recognized as a vampire

by the reader in the nineteenth century, whether her vampirism were overtly mentioned or not. In this way, Brontë uses her knowledge of the vampire to criticize and comment upon woman's role in the nineteenth century. The only metaphorical vampire in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is the society and culture of the nineteenth century, which fed upon women's true selves and identities, leaving them mere husks of what they once were or could have become.

WORKS CITED

- Auerbach, Nina. *Our Vampires, Ourselves*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Barber, Paul. *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.
- Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. London: Penguin Books, 1966.
- Brontë, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1990.
- Byron, Lord George Gordon. "The Giaour." *The Complete Poetical Works of Byron*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1933.
- Frank, Emily. *A Chainless Soul: A Life of Emily Brontë*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990.
- Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. "Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë's Bible of Hell." *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980. 248-308.
- Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1996.
- Knoepfelmacher, U.C. "The After-life of *Wuthering Heights*." *Emily Brontë: Wuthering Heights*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. 106-127.
- Liddell, Robert. "Emily Brontë: For Thrushcross Grange." *Twin Spirits: The Novels of Emily and Anne Brontë*. London: Peter Owen, 1990. 13-75.
- Marigny, Jean. *Vampires: Restless Creatures of the Night*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1994.

- Pykett, Lyn. "Gender and Genre in *Wuthering Heights*: Gothic Plot and Domestic Fiction." *Women Writers: Emily Brontë*. London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1989. 71-85.
- Polidori, John. "The Vampyre." *Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula*. ed. Christopher Frayling. London: Faber and Faber, 1991. 108-125.
- Senf, Carol A. *The Vampire in Nineteenth-Century English Literature*. Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1988.
- Showalter, Elaine. *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985.
- Sonstroem, David. "Wuthering Heights and the Limits of Vision." *Modern Critical Interpretations: Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights*. ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987. 27-45.
- Taylor, Irene. *Holy Ghosts: The Male Muses of Emily and Charlotte Brontë*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.
- Twitchell, James B. *The Living Dead: A Study of the Vampire in Romantic Literature*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1981.
- Van Ghent, Dorothy. "On Wuthering Heights." *Modern Critical Interpretations: Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights*. ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987. 9-25.
- Ward, Mary. "Wuthering Heights." *Critical Essays on Emily Brontë*. ed. Thomas John Winnifrith. New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1997. 119-129.
- Williams, Meg Harris. *A Strange Way of Killing: The Poetic Structure of Wuthering Heights*. Worchester: Roland Harris Education Trust, 1987.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank my major professor, Kathy Hickok, for her support and guidance during this project. Thanks also go to Professors Brenda Daly and Mary Sawyer, the other members of my committee, for their contributions. A special thank you goes to the late Mike Warren, who served on my committee until the time of his death. I must also acknowledge my other professors in the English program, all of whom have had an important part in cementing the foundation for this thesis.

Thanks are due to all my friends, past and present, who were extremely supportive of this project from the beginning. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the love and support of my family, who encouraged me to follow my heart no matter where it led me.